

# The Caroline Connection

## Director's Message



Dina Gomes Daly, Director

As you may be aware, The State of Maryland faces a \$1.7 billion structural deficit. On Tuesday, 10/23/07, Governor Martin O'Malley released a *Cost of Delay* budget, which itemized cuts that will be required to balance the State's fiscal year 2009 budget if the Special Legislative Session, which began on Monday, October 29, 2007 fails to pass a comprehensive budget package. Secretary Brenda Donald, Department of Human Resources (DHR) has stated that the *Cost of Delay* budget has very serious implications for the Department of Human Resources and the local

programs provided by departments of social services. Secretary Donald further indicated that reductions would affect the following programs:

- Foster Care, which serves abused and neglected children in out-of-home placements. Cuts would decrease foster care grants and our ability to advance DHR's "Place Matters" strategy, which focuses on permanency for children.
- Temporary Disability Assistance Program, which serves disabled individuals with some basic necessities while they wait for permanent SSI benefits from the Social Security Administration.

- Temporary Cash Assistance Program, which serves the most needy Marylanders. Secretary Donald estimates that more than 50,000 low-income families with children would see a reduction in their benefits

Reduction would also eliminate *over 700 DHR positions*, which would further affect our ability to provide adequate services to the many families and individuals we serve. As the special legislative session progresses, I encourage each of us to be well informed of the decisions being made and to ask questions regarding how they will impact the services that Caroline County Department of Social Services provides to our most vulnerable and disadvantaged citizens.

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Programs that would be affected by reductions:

- Foster Care, which serves abused & neglected children;
- Temporary Disability Assistance Program, which serves disabled individuals; and
- Temporary Cash Assistance Program, which serves the most needy Marylanders

## Accreditation Update

By Susie Spiering

Dina Daly and Susie Spiering have begun having weekly meetings with the committee consisting of the lead person for each standard. This has been time well spent with team members who have asked questions and discussed concerns.

Also, each lead has been assigned a day to present the information they have obtained on their standard to that point. All new protocols and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) need to be written and in practice by the beginning of December '07. **SOP's need to be in practice for six months prior to being evaluated by the Council On Accreditation (COA) when the site visit takes place at the end of June '08.**

Pam Evans, Coordinator for Accreditation

Caroline County DSS Accreditation Committee-leads & Stand-ins



Photo by Kelly S. Allen

L to R: Ty Kennedy, Maggie Tarrant, Susie Spiering, Karen Satterfield. Second row L to R: Sandy Magee, Terry Bond (standing in for Joan Reed), Jenna Spurry, Linda Webb; CCDS Assistant Dir, FIA & Child Support, Pam Jones; DHR Coordinator for Accreditation, Patty Linder, Rayshelle Robinson, and Robin Bigelow.

at DHR visited our Agency on October 5, to meet with the committee and answer questions.

Each lead person has been presented with a cross-walk to help them identify what survived from the 7th Standard to the 8th Edition Standard, and this will hopefully make things a little less confusing in the process of identifying needed information.

**With a lot of hard work behind us, we're now on our way!**

## Michelle Brooks Receives DHR's Customer Service Excellence Award —By Linda Webb

Michelle Brooks, Child Support Supervisor, was honored by DHR on October 2, 2007 as the Caroline County recipient of the Customer Service Excellence Award.

DHR describes the customer service awards ceremony, held each year during National Customer Service Week, as recognizing the **organization's best customer service professionals**. Those selected consistently display a strong commitment to excellence in customer service. They perform their jobs with competence, integrity and compassion, and strive to make government services responsive to the needs of citizens. **This year's award ceremony theme was**

**"Customer Service – Going Beyond Expectations."**

Michelle was nominated as a result of her commitment to providing the highest level of service to the children and families of Caroline County as demonstrated by her skill in analyzing work process, recommending and implementing process improvements, and problem-solving around staff shortages and workload issues. Through her leadership, the Child Support division met all four performance goals in the last Federal fiscal year. This level of performance translates directly into customer service excellence.

Congratulations, Michelle!

## Backpacks Given to Foster Children



Pictured: L to R – April Sharp, Acting Director, Talbot County DSS; Susan Moore, Foster Care Supervisor, Talbot County DSS; Jeannie Haddaway, R-37B-Talbot; Nancy Mendez, Acting Assistant Director, Wicomico County DSS; Trina Lucas, Recruitment and Retention Worker, Dorchester County DSS; Diane Shaffer, Foster Care/Adoption Supervisor, Caroline County DSS; Darlene Sampson, Assistant Director, Dorchester County DSS; and Dale Oberender, Assistant Director, Caroline County DSS.

PHOTO BY MEGAN WATTS. Reprinted with permission.

Del. Jeannie Haddaway, R-37B-Talbot, and the Office Depot Foundation presented backpacks with school supplies to 375 foster children in Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester and Wicomico counties. The foundation is partnered with the National Foundation of Women Legislators for the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual National Backpack Program. By the end of this year, Office Depot

and the Office Depot Foundation will have given away nearly 1.5 million backpacks since the program began in 2001

For the third consecutive year, 300,000 backpacks are being donated across the United States and Canada. "It's wonderful to have additional resources," said April Sharp, Acting Director of the Talbot County Department of Social

Services. "Every child deserves all the supplies they need to have a successful school year."

Each backpack holds a pencil pouch containing a ruler, four crayons, a glue stick, a pen, a pencil, a pencil sharpener and an eraser.

Anyone interested in becoming a foster parent should contact their local department of social services.

## Employee of the Month



Karen Satterfield  
August 2007



Rayshelle Robinson-  
September 2007



Troy Livingstone  
October 2007



Angela Murray  
November 2007



## Caroline County On The Move For Children, Families, Communities

On May 3 – 4, 2007 staff from our Division of Children and Family Services met to develop a Strategic Plan that focuses



Photo by Sandy Franz

Seated L to R: Diane Shaffer, Stacey Saunders; Consultant, Ty Kennedy, Latessa Sampson. Back Row L to R: Peggy Gaestel, Dale Oberender, Gina Brittingham, Ivy Lambert, Dina Daly, Robin Bigelow, Leslie Jordan.

on enhancing our outcomes for children, and families in our communities. Focusing on family centered, neighborhood based practice, a six month plan was developed to implement Family Involvement Meetings and create a Self-Evaluation Team.

This has been followed-up by a staff training with the Child Welfare Staff and an initial Community Orientation. The Community Orientation took place on October 4, 2007 and was warmly received by all participants. Plans are being made to roll

out additional orientations to community partners who could not attend on the 4<sup>th</sup> as this year ends and the New Year begins.

The Division's decision to focus on family centered, neighborhood based practice is a strategic one. By looking at how we approach, engage and work with families and communities and, by challenging ourselves to improve on our state and federal outcomes, we will enhance our success in keeping children safe, assuring permanency in their lives, and supporting families who need assistance in keeping their families together.

Family Involvement Meetings are a practice methodology that takes advantage of the synergy created by bringing people together. In this meeting, extended family supports, community and agency staff come together to share information to make decisions and plans to keep

children safe and support the family in doing so. It is a collaborative process that requires mutual respect, consideration and accountability. This approach is a national practice that has been proven successful in 60 locations throughout the country. Caroline County is out in front in Maryland as it implements this approach as one of a dozen jurisdictions, and one of 2 counties doing so on the eastern shore.

Self Evaluation is a must if we are going to celebrate our success and identify where we must improve to enhance our services. By creating and sustaining a team of staff from across Children and Family Services, we will be able to gather, look at, analyze and respond to our service data.

We are excited about our progress and will keep you informed as we move forward!

- Submitted by Peggy Gaestel

## News From the Create, Motivate & Inspire (CMI) Team



Photo by Sandy Franz

L to R: Leslie Jordan, Maggie Tarrant, Karen Hodges, Loretta Jackson, Melissa Jones-Harris, and Cindy Fowler.

The CMI committee would like to thank all of the staff who attended the Staff Appreciation Day on September 14th at Tuckahoe State Park. The food was delicious and the afternoon was fun. Thanks to everyone for participating in our own version of Win, Lose, or Draw. A special thanks to all of the staff

who were brave enough to participate in the agency's first annual Singing Bee. Congratulations to the grand prize winner, Dale Oberender.

The 2nd Annual Halloween Pot-Luck luncheon was a success too. Thanks to all the scary, funny and cute costumes that made us all feel like big kids again. Unit participation in the pumpkin

decorating contest made the afternoon fun and carefree. Congratulations to the Administration unit for the their winning version of Cinderella's pumpkin carriage.

The CMI committee is always looking for fun, energetic and creative people to help plan and organize activities for the staff. If you think that you can help, please contact Leslie

## Jackson Chosen Mentor of the Year

—Article & photo courtesy of Chesapeake Publishing



Rosalie Jackson of Ridgely was nominated as Caroline County's Local Management Board's 2007 Mentor of the Year. Jackson opens her home to several foster children throughout the year. Jackson has provided care for an abused infant and helped to provide for mentally challenged foster children.

"This provider is a very special gem in our foster care family," said Robin Bigelow, Family Services coordinator with Caroline County. The Caroline County Department of Social Services administers the foster care program.

Jackson was surprised when her name was announced for the Mentor of the Year award at the Human Service Council Annual Awards dinner in June.

"To know that somebody acknowledges that you can give love and care to kids other than your own, especially to those in need, made me feel very special and appreciated," said Jackson.

Jackson grew up in the 60s in Ridgely as one of the youngest in a family of four brothers and six sisters with a mother who served as the "neighborhood mom."

"If any of the kids got hurt, my mother would be right there with a Band-Aid," said Jackson. Jackson sees her mother, Mary Grace Downes,

as her best mentor especially when it came to raising her four children, who are now adults.

Jackson says kids have always gravitated to her, whether in the church or the neighborhood. After Jackson's children had grown, she found a feeling of void in not having kids around. After retiring from a career with the Department of Corrections in Dover, Del., and upon learning about a shortage of foster care families in the Mid-Shore area, Jackson brought children back into her life and became a foster parent in 2005.

When it comes to foster care for all children, especially those with special needs, Jackson sees her reward in the love she gets back from all the foster children she continues to care for.

"If I can give an extra special hug or kiss or just listen to one of the kids that I help out, I can give love and they'll give it right back," Jackson said.

While some foster children have experienced abuse and neglect, others just need a safe, stable and nurturing place to live until they can be reunited with their own families, placed with relatives or adopted.

"I've never regretted saying yes to any of the children I've cared for and would take any of them back," Jackson said.

To learn more about becoming a foster parent or to attend an upcoming training session, call the Caroline County Department of Social Services at 410-819-4500.

### Foster Care News —By Diane Shaffer

Foster parent, Rosalie Jackson was featured in an article in the Star Democrat on October 19, 2007 (see above). The Human Services Council honored Ms. Jackson as the Foster Parent of the Year. A potluck supper was held with Caroline County foster parents on October 16 2007. The guest speaker was Joanne Staples, Director of Caroline County CASA. The next potluck dinner is scheduled for January 15, 2008 at 6:00 p.m. at the 3rd Street building.

Stacey Saunders, child welfare consultant, presented an overview of Family Centered Neighborhood Based Practice to the community on October 4, 2007. There was a large attendance by our community partners. Ms. Saunders returned on November 9, 2007 to train child welfare staff to continue with this community outreach.

Cille Tyler, LCSW-C, conducted a two-day seminar on October 25 and 26, to train facilitators skilled in conducting nurturing classes. CCDSS staff and community partners participated in the Nurturing Facilitator training. Child Welfare has further contracted with Ms. Tyler to conduct nurturing classes for parents on a monthly schedule through February. There are two days of nurturing camp scheduled for the spring, including one specifically for teens. Please contact any of the child welfare supervisors for further information.

Parents as Partners underwent construction to develop a new logo and look so, please be aware of the new and improved program that is coming your way. Brochures are in the process of being approved and flyers are posted at both sites in the lobby area; Please take time to check them out on your way into or out of the offices.

Now to the insight of what is happening with PAP: In the month of August Parents as Partners and the Early Head Start Programs got together to coordinate the 2nd Annual End of the Summer Picnic, which took place at Martinek State Park in Denton on 9/22/07. The man of the hour (speaker) for the Dads All Deserve Support (D.A.D.S.) group was the original Fatherhood for Now founder, Howard Davis. Mr. Davis' topic of discussion was "The Difference Dads Make in Children". The purpose of the discussion was to introduce fathers to ways of viewing themselves and their contributions within the family setting. He gave examples and factual data to encourage the fathers to think constructively and to interact effectively with their children. The participants were *elated* to see Mr. Davis again. A total of 7 were in attendance.

The month of September was the kick off of the 2nd Annual End of Summer Picnic. It was a day of *fun, sun and good food*. The activities consisted of volleyball, football and badminton. A variety of playground balls and



**Parenting...It's a Privilege!**

playground equipment were available (some children even brought their roller blades!). A total of 14 were in attendance. We came to a pit stop early in the day when the speaker for the D.A.D.S group had to cancel. But, we got the brains working and continued to press forward. The night was considered open discussion for any issues or situations and to plan any upcoming events. The Dads were challenged to bring more participants to the next group. A total of 6 was in attendance.

The month of October was a month of success. The challenge from the previous month was a *shocker*. The lady of stardom (speaker) was DSS's very own job developer, Jamie Jenkins. Mrs. Jenkins touched base on the different processes of job searching, résumé writing, interviewing skills and preparation. She also discussed the pros and cons of attitudes, dress attire and which job is for you. The interaction with the participants was phenomenal to a point where the Dads literally had to get out of their seat. In attendance was a whopping 17 that night. *Are you ready for some football?* The Parents as Partners and D.A.D.S group participants and their families traveled to Dover, DE to witness the Wesley Wolverines mull the Seagulls of Salisbury University 20 – 13 to claim the ACFC Title. Sorry Seagull fans and alumni, I feel your pain. Stay tuned for the next in PAP NEWS!  
- By Shauna Camper

## Noteworthy News from Caroline County Child Protective Services Unit

Things have gotten busy around here since school has started back up and the referrals are coming in.

Our Investigation numbers are up considerably from July and August, with several recent placements that have contributed to an increased Foster Care caseload.

We continue to work on developing and refining our Family Centered Practice model and have participated in more than 7 Family Involvement Meetings (FIM) since the end of July.

A number of members from our Multi-Disciplinary Team, along with our CPS staff, participated in, completed and were certified in the "Finding Words Maryland" training. They are: Gina Brittingham, Ty Kennedy, Tom Torrence from the States Attorney's Office, and TFC Jerry Golliday from MD State Police- Easton Barracks.

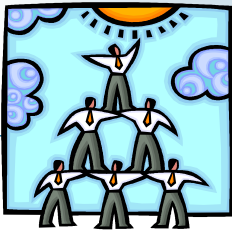
Good work team!

A number of child welfare staff as well as several community partners were able to attend the Annual Mid Atlantic Conference On Child Abuse and Neglect that is sponsored by the Maryland's Children's' Alliance. It was reported that they received solid training and good information.

Thank you to all the contributors for our entry of the Eastern Shore Hospitality Basket. The silent auction raised a fair amount of money and it is my understanding that the Caroline County contribution was among the top 5.

Finally, it is with regret that we say good-bye to Kristy Cordrey, who resigned her position as Victims Advocate, and will be assuming new duties in Annapolis working for Service Coordination. Best wishes to her, she will be missed.—Ty Kennedy

## Caroline Child Support Meets All 4 Performance Goals for FFY 2007 *-By Linda Webb*



“The truth of the matter is that there’s nothing you can’t accomplish if:

- 1) You clearly decide what it is that you’re absolutely committed to achieving,
- 2) You’re willing to take massive action,
- 3) You notice what’s working or not, and
- 4) You continue to change your approach until you achieve what you want, using whatever life gives you along the way.”

*- Anthony Robbins  
American motivation speaker,  
life coach and author.*

The Caroline County Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), which became a demonstration site in January 2007, met and exceeded all four federal performance goals for federal fiscal year 2007. In fact, Caroline was the only demo site in the state to meet all four goals this year!

By statutory definition, a demonstration site is a jurisdiction that competes with privatized Offices of Child Support. There are two privatized jurisdictions in the state – Baltimore City and Queen Anne’s County. As of the end of the federal fiscal year (September 30, 2007), a total of nineteen demonstration sites were in

place. Three additional counties became demonstration sites on October 1, 2007. The final county will be required to become a demo site before the current statute sunsets in 2009.

As a demo site, each jurisdiction sets individualized goals based on historical performance and federal targets. Performance is measured in the areas of establishment of paternity, establishment of support orders, current collections, and collections on arrears.

A number of statewide and innovative local efforts have contributed to this success. Staff specialization and targeted enforcement through the use of ad hoc

reports provided by UMB School of Social Work have aided the effort. Collaborative efforts with the Circuit Court of Caroline County and the Clerk of Court’s Office, as well as Parents as Partners and the Work Opportunities team through the Non-Custodial Parent Employment Program have also boosted performance. Dollar Days (Saturday hours) and targeted local mailings were special projects taken on by the division. The most important factor, however, is the creativity, innovative teamwork and commitment to excellence of all Caroline County Child Support staff.

Congratulations!

## Caroline County DSS Exceeds 2007 Maryland Charity Goal

*- By Terry Bond*

Here at the Caroline County Department of Social Services we have something to celebrate. Not only did we meet our goal of \$3,500 for the 2007 Maryland Charity Campaign, we exceeded it by \$546.00!

As state employees, the very nature of many of



our jobs is to provide services that support our needy, keep our streets safe and our families and communities healthy and productive. You have been generous with your financial support and have set a good example for Caroline County by setting the bar high.

Thank you for giving!



## A Collage of CCDSS Agency Events







## Web site benefit estimators: A handy tool for Retirement Planning

IF YOU'RE MORE THAN A YEAR FROM RETIREMENT, you can still get an idea of your future retirement benefit by using the State Retirement Agency's online Web site benefit estimators. Log on to the Retirement Agency Web site at [www.sra.state.md.us](http://www.sra.state.md.us) and, under the heading **Featured Links**, click on **Online Benefit Estimators**. Indicate your system of membership and follow the on-screen instructions to estimate your benefit at retirement. The online benefit estimators do not determine eligibility for retirement and are provided for illustration purposes only. The estimator's output is based only on information you provide, and does not include any information contained in System records.



## Keep your beneficiary information up to date

IF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED A CHANGE in your life – such as the arrival of a new family member, a marriage or divorce, or the death of a loved one – you may wish to update your beneficiary designation. Your designated beneficiary(ies) are listed on your annual Personal Statement of Benefits. If you don't remember who you selected as your beneficiary, simply call the State Retirement Agency's automated phone system at 420-625-5555 or toll free 1-800-492-5909 and select option 3 to check your beneficiaries on file. Beneficiary changes must be requested in writing. To change your beneficiary(ies), obtain Beneficiary Designation (Form 4) from your Retirement Coordinator or from the Retirement Agency Web site at [www.sra.state.md.us](http://www.sra.state.md.us). Your new designation will become effective as soon as your completed form is received by the Agency.

## Have questions about retirement? *Register to attend a free Pre-Retirement Seminar*

IF YOU'RE WITHIN EIGHT YEARS OF RETIREMENT, make plans now to attend a free Pre-Retirement Seminar offered by the State Retirement Agency of Maryland. A new season of information packed seminars will kick off next spring, with sessions scheduled from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore. These day-long events provide participants with a detailed explanation of the retirement process. Dynamic seminar presenters lead discussions on state pension benefits, legal issues, Social Security, financial planning and enjoying retirement. These specially trained speakers address subjects of interest to Maryland state employees, teachers and employees of libraries, community colleges, counties, towns and cities. Plus, all seminar attendees receive a 300-page booklet on retirement that is theirs to keep. Registration forms will be available in early January 2008 from your Retirement Coordinator and on the Internet at [www.sra.state.md.us](http://www.sra.state.md.us). Different registration forms are provided for state employees and for employees of participating governmental units, so be sure to submit the appropriate form.

To attend a seminar, you must be a member of the State Retirement and Pension System of Maryland *and* be within eight years of retirement. Your spouse is welcome to attend with you. Signed interpreters can be provided on request. For more information, please contact the Retirement Agency at 410-625-5555 or toll free at 1-800-492-5909.



## Love in December

*Written by Josie Seth*

Lights blinking and twinkling – I do declare  
**There's a feeling of love in the air.**

People lingering and strolling in the street,  
Smiling and greeting everyone they meet.

Upsetting thoughts, hurt feelings put aside  
Time to buy gifts beautifully wrapped and tied.

Sometimes these gifts are deserved and sometimes not  
**But it's December** – bad feelings are forgot.

As beautiful wrappings are discarded  
Bad thoughts, anger and resentment - these feelings should be disregarded.

**Let's think on good thoughts and deeds.**  
We will be much happier – this is what the world needs.

As days turn into weeks – weeks into months – as thoughts start to drift,  
Continue doing good things – **don't let our mind shift.**

**Let's strive to remember  
All our "Love in December"**

*December 2007*